

## ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

colonizers. The possibility of colonization by enterprising individuals, in the Western manner, was unknown to Orientals, who can conceive no action outside the group,

Local initiative had for psychological and practical reasons to be supplemented by official support. The mother commune, through its rich and influential members, created a kind of patron-client relationship with the new-found community—a policy dictated by immediate necessity but the source of future discord. The central government, too, was glad to empty the state prisons and to force out erstwhile male-factors to colonize new lands—a purging of the body politic akin to disposing of the commune's undesirables. For two thousand years the Aimamites had all the land they wanted at their easy disposal, so naturally they took the best ground first, swarming loosely over its surface and leaving great gaps of wasteland in their successive waves of expansion. Here the state stepped in and tried to regulate, by military and penal colonization, the filling in of these voids, especially around the frontier region. The incorporation of these new communes into the great Annamite family came with the official recognition of their utility. As a special mark of his benevolence the Emperor himself would select the name and site of the infant commune. In this way the whole movement was harmonious: it was a spontaneous expansion from within the old commune, and it was officially regulated from without by a government eager to push back its frontiers and also to dispose of anti-social elements which threatened its internal tranquillity.

The quiet industry with which this colossal colonizing effort was accomplished detracted from the dramatic quality of this struggle to reclaim land from a violent nature, and from enemies

both internal and external. So vital to the state was the function performed by the expanding commune that the central government did not interfere in its political or economic life, providing taxes were paid, military recruits selected, and the socio-religious order maintained. Within this orbit the commune could govern itself. Despite a certain diversity caused by varying local conditions, the Internal organization of Annamite communes shows an underlying uniformity. The commune named its own administrators, it could borrow or sell at will—all but its inalienable lands—carry out public works, police its own territory, and care for its own poor and infirm. On certain salient points, the commune showed its independence of the central government. The state did not know its population was nor the amount of land under cultivation, nor what assessment each citizen paid as his share of the taxes. The com-